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ABSTRACT

This brief policy statement by the Further Education Unit (FEU) in London, England, describes the way in which the FE system should relate to the needs and potential of women. The document restates a catalogue of deficiencies in this area, and then refers to previous and ongoing FEU work. Against this background, the statement analyzes some of the FE curricular issues that reflect progress and/or deserve more attention. In part, this statement is a response to the recommendations of the recent report of the Women's National Commission ("The Other Half of Our Future," extracted in this booklet). There is little doubt that if the FE system is to play a more effective role in the education and training of women, then educational policy makers need to appraise the content, design, delivery, and management of the curricula, from traditional education to the new technologies. The statement suggests that a starting point for those who have not already done so is to develop an appropriate equal opportunities policy. For those local authorities and colleges who have such a policy, this statement is intended to confirm their initiative and encourage further action. (KC)

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Changing the Focus: Women and FE

An FEU View

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February 1985

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Dear Sir/Madam

CHANGING THE FOCUS

Attached is a brief policy statement by the FEU Board of Management, describing the ways in which the FE system should relate to the needs and potential of women. The statement rehearses what must be to many a familiar catalogue of deficiencies in this area, but they remain important enough to restate. Previous and ongoing FEU work is referred to and against this background the statement analyses some of the FE curricular issues that reflect progress and/or deserve more attention.

The Board is pleased to acknowledge the recent report of the Women's National Commission* and in part at least this FEU statement is a response to its recommendations.

There is little doubt that if the FE system is to play a more effective role in the education/training of women, then we need to appraise the content, design, 'delivery' and management of much of our curricula on offer: from TVEI to the new technologies.

The statement suggests that a starting point for those who have not already done so is to develop an appropriate equal opportunities policy. For those local authorities and colleges who have such a policy, we hope that this statement will help to confirm their initiative and encourage further action.

Yours faithfully,

Jack Mansell

Jack Mansell
Chief Officer

* *The Other Half of our Future*, Women's National Commission, 1984

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CHANGING THE FOCUS: WOMEN AND FE

I. THE NEED FOR ACTION

1. Women's participation in the workforce and the community, and their patterns of employment, indicate that soundly-based education and training for women must be an essential part of national educational policy. Yet there exists a cycle whereby women study a narrow range of subjects at school, leading to restricted opportunities in their further education, training or employment. For the complete educational and personal development of women and for their effective participation in the economic and social environment, intervention in this cycle is critical.

2. The Further Education system, broadly defined, is uniquely placed to effect such an intervention in that it spans the schools and higher education age ranges and links the spheres of employment and training with vocational and non-vocational education. In many institutions, however, neither policy nor practice reflects an awareness of the needs and potential of women. The FEU Board of Management considers it appropriate to outline ways in which the FE system, the institutions and individuals working within it, should respond in terms of curriculum and organisation to these needs and this potential.

3. From its inception, FEU has taken care to highlight issues relating to women and FE. A Basis for Choice (1979) referred to the restrictions that sex stereotyping and social conditioning place on girls' vocational choice; Further Opportunities in Focus (1980) studied the range of bridging courses offered to women; and Balancing the Equation (1981) dealt with women and science/technology courses within FE. This last publication, prepared for FEU by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), found a wide audience and an FEU project following up its recommendations is currently in progress in London colleges.[1] Other initiatives are under way: trainers of teachers and youth workers at the University of Surrey are conducting an FEU project to develop techniques for raising the perceptual awareness of young women,[2] and early in 1985, in collaboration with the School Curriculum Development Committee there will be a seminar leading to a publication on 'Girls' and

Women's Career Development - strategies for schools and colleges.'

4. In the Autumn of 1983, the Unit gave evidence to a working group of the Women's National Commission (WNC) which was drawing up a report on Training Opportunities for Women. This was published in 1984 as The Other Half of our Future; the proposals to educationalists appear as an appendix to this document.

In the introduction to their report, the Women's National Commission stated "The work of the Group has been wide-ranging as they found they could not divorce the question of training from the question of opportunities for women in further and higher education." FEU has noted the consideration that WNC gave to FEU evidence and the recommendations they make to the Unit and others involved in the provision of education and training for women. This statement draws on much of the evidence contained in the WNC report and in part responds to its recommendations.

II. CURRICULUM OPPORTUNITIES

Schools: Curriculum bias pre-16

5. The Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph said[3] "Girls' education must reflect the fact that most women will be working for much of their lives, and that many may be the sole or principal breadwinner for a family." There has recently been increasing pressure within the schools' sector to examine the curriculum at primary and secondary level and the effect that sex-stereotyping has upon the development of girls and boys. There is now extensive research, and much debate, as to how curriculum bias in schools can best be remedied. Pressure from HMI and others for a common core or 'entitlement' curriculum in school may lead to all pupils studying science, computer literacy, mathematics and craft, design and technology (CDT) to at least age 16. In this way vocational and subject choice will be less restricted by gender stereotyping.

6. Notwithstanding such developments however, many women ultimately opt for a narrow selection of 'humanities' subjects in secondary and further education, thus closing off a range of

vocational routes (and limiting flexibility of choice in higher education provision).

7. The MSC Technical Vocational Educational Initiative, (TVEI) spanning the 14-18 age range, and schools and FE sectors, directly specifies in the criteria for programme development: "Equal Opportunities should be available to young people of both sexes... Care should be taken to avoid sex stereotyping and... throughout the programme there should be both a general and a technical/vocational element."

In spite of these criteria, there are signs that in the delivery of some TVEI schemes option choices have shown clear stereotyping, especially where options are described in terms of old-fashioned terminology e.g. cookery rather than catering/ nutrition, or office skills rather than administration/business studies. In advising girls and boys about option choice, in TVEI and elsewhere, parents and teachers often ignore aptitudes shown and discourage non-traditional routes of study or vocational choice. A failure to think ahead to years 3 and 4 of TVEI in terms of avoiding gender-stereotyping, may mean that pupils are fed into existing courses (in FE colleges) which are designed on traditional lines and tend to attract girls or boys exclusively.

Vocational education

8. Historically, vocational education has been predominantly for men. The range of curriculum offerings in a typical technical college prospectus reflected this in the quantitative and qualitative balance between provision for the manufacturing compared to the service industries.

The tiny number of apprenticeships made available to young women is a well-known phenomenon, as is the lack of opportunity offered for continuing education for those already embarked upon a career at age 16[4].

The Youth Training Scheme

9. Against the background of rapidly increasing unemployment,

especially among young people, many school-leavers have joined the Youth Training Scheme, which is designed to contribute to the achievement of Objectives 1 and 2 of the MSC New Training Initiative.* FEU has always regarded the education system as an essential element in the delivery and quality of YTS, but this is not MSC policy.

10. MSC has ensured that virtually equal opportunities exist in terms of places available on schemes, but the evidence from the first year of YTS reveals that there has been almost no impact on sex stereotyping in the pattern of take-up of opportunities. In Mode 'A' schemes (those provided by employers) girls are to be found overwhelmingly in placements relating to Occupational Training Families whose purposes relate to Community and Health Services, Personal Service and Sales, Food Preparation and Sales and Administrative, Clerical and Office Services. (Only 20% of women in employment are in the manufacturing, technical and scientific sectors of industry.)

11. The most alarming fact of all to emerge from the statistics regarding early YTS is that girls represent only 21% of those taking places in ITECs (Information Technology Centres). Those who see the new technology as a potential for expanding the horizons of new career patterns for women will find little encouragement in these figures.

The Pre-Vocational Curriculum: CPVE

12. The FEU has repeatedly affired its commitment to a pre-vocational curriculum such as described in the Joint Board for Pre-Vocational Education Consultative Document[5] and whose aims are:

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*Objective 1 relates to the redesigning of apprenticeship arrangements towards a competence-based system, and objective 2 seeks to provide 'that all young people under the age of 18 have the opportunity either of continuing in full-time education or of entering a period of planned work experience combined with work-related training and education'. MSC A New Training Initiative (1981)

a) to assist the transition from school to adulthood by further equipping young people with the basic skills, experiences, attitudes, knowledge and personal and social competencies required for success in adult life including work;

b) to provide personally/individually relevant educational experience which encourages learning and achievement;

c) to provide young people with recognition for their attainments by acquiring a qualification emboyding learning and achievement;

d) to provide an accepted basis for progression to continued education, training and/or work.

13. The implementation of the curriculum framework (with its three major components of a common core, vocational studies and additional studies) against an increased awareness of the need for genuinely equal opportunities will help mitigate the effects of gender stereotyping and narrow vocational choice.

To be effective, however, it is vital that the ten 'core' areas* of CPVE are given equal weight and access so that they can be used as a diagnostic 'checklist of entitlement' to secure the breadth and balance of the curriculum for female students (e.g. to fill 'gaps' left by secondary option choices in computer literacy, manipulative and scientific skills etc).

14. An aim of the pre-vocational curriculum (for both male and female students) is not simply to divert more of them into non-traditional subject and vocational areas, but to empower them to make better-informed and better-supported choices about their future.

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*CPVE Core Components: Personal and Career Development; Communication; Numeracy; Science and Technology; Industrial, Social and Economic Studies; Information Technology; Skills for Learning, Decision Making and Adaptability; Practical Skills; Social Skills; Creative Development.

Women and Science/Technology

15. Recent initiatives in curriculum and staff development concerned with the implementation of CPVE can contribute to improvements in curriculum content and delivery, but two areas, science and (new) technology are matters of particular concern.

There is now no lack of research into the reasons why girls 'get switched off' from science in school and college, and FEU's Balancing the Equation[6] amongst others, has examined issues surrounding women's participation and attainment in science/technology courses. The main blocks to access and progress were identified as:

(i) The impersonal and 'masculine' image of science promoted by particular curricula and teaching methods;

(ii) Social and cultural pressures, including negative (secondary) education experience of science, leading to a lack of confidence in women in applying for and succeeding on science courses;

(iii) Inappropriate and insufficient marketing, resulting in a lack of awareness of women about science and science-based courses and careers.

16. There are strategies that can be adopted by colleges to counter the effects of these blocks to women's participation and thus assist in ensuring equality of opportunity across the whole curriculum. (see paras 26-32).

New Technologies

17. Concern has already been expressed about the lack of female take-up of opportunities offered by the new technology (especially Information Technology) and there are widespread fears that female students are 'elbowed out' of participation in hands-on experience of computers. The syndrome of computers as 'boys' toys' can be countered by the use of computers across the full range of areas of the curriculum and by the development of appropriate software which holds the interest of girls as well as

boys at home and in the classroom.

18. New technologies should be the least resistant to the employment of well-qualified women. Female students can be alerted to the enhanced career prospects for women with IT skills, e.g. in progressing beyond 'secretarial' studies, and for computer technologists to work from home combining their job with domestic commitments.

WISE?

19. 1984 saw welcome initiatives by the Engineering Council and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to promote science and engineering as careers for women. A worrying feature of Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) year has nonetheless been the concentration on attracting girls into science/engineering through 'A' level and university studies. The campaign has tended to ignore the potential of craft and technician education delivered through the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) or the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) routes of study. The Engineering Council's assertion that the verdict of WISE must remain open until the figures for 'A' level entry over the next couple of years are completed lacks vision in its relative narrowness and elitism which serves neither the needs of British industry nor the many young women who are its potential employees. A better verdict on WISE will be based on the long-term female participation in science and technology/based careers at all levels.

III THE FEMALE CLIENTELE OF FE

20. In some FE institutions, and in certain areas of work, women are hardly apparent. Those female students who find themselves in an FE college are likely to be part of an establishment organised by men for men often with a monocultural ethos. Much of this is explained by the historical development of vocational education and female enrolments are concentrated largely in GCE courses or in provision related to caring and secretarial studies.

School leavers

21. In spite of changing perceptions about the role of women in society since the time of the 1944 Education Act, the effects of economic recession encourage young people on leaving school to 'play safe' with vocational choice and opt for conventional career patterns. Careers education in schools is often the responsibility of teachers with little or no specialised careers training, or experience of the realities of industry or the job market. The work of the Careers Service in school has been limited by the demands made on it by MSC and the response to youth unemployment.

Careers advice and counselling in FE have traditionally reflected the industry-based views of FE teachers. These views are likely to represent the gender-stereotyped attitudes that until recently totally dominated the world of work and, as most FE staff have worked in a single sector of industry/commerce, their knowledge of that world is partial and sometimes dated.

22. The most enlightened careers advice can make little impact against the pressures on young women of their families, peer groups and some parts of the media to follow traditional employment routes. Such social and cultural pressures may encourage them to opt out of the labour market at an early stage in order to marry and rear a family; this means they may forfeit their right to subsidised education and training up to 18 and are forced to re-enter an increasingly competitive labour market at a later stage, under-educated and untrained for the range of jobs suited to their capabilities.

Women returners

23. Statistics about the changing participation of women in the workforce abound; e.g. 61% of married women are in work or actively seeking work; very many of them in jobs which under-utilise their competence and experience. MSC has commented[7] "from a national point of view the waste of resources inherent in the failure to make full use of the ability of women needs to be corrected."

There is now considerable scope for the development of provision for women returners to education and training, as well as updating courses for those in work. It is worth noting that some of the most imaginative schemes using alternative sources of funding like the European Social Fund and Inner Area Programmes have been developed outside the education system by municipal and voluntary agencies. It may be that the education/training of 'mature' women is perceived as politically fashionable, developed only by those who consider themselves progressive and perhaps as a result not taken seriously by others. The fact remains that "women represent 50% of the nation's talent and 40% of the workforce"[8] so their education and training needs are hardly to be regarded as marginal.

Women from minority ethnic groups

24. Much of what we propose will benefit women from minority ethnic groups, but there are well-known barriers in the way of the full take-up of equal opportunities; these barriers relate to communication and mutual understanding as well as to discrimination. Black women as individuals and in groups are beginning clearly to articulate their needs and demands; institutions should devise ways of involving such groups in consultations about curriculum content, style and organisation.

IV CHANGING THE CURRICULUM

25. A systematic process of reappraisal of curriculum content and delivery, as well as the general college ethos and management style will benefit both male and female students and staff. The following points should be considered by teachers and institutions as themes for curriculum review and staff development.

Curriculum organisation and design

26. Staff engaged in the process of reviewing curriculum organisation and content should bear in mind that :

(i) a negotiated/learner-centred curriculum, designed around clearly-stated aims and objectives will be more appropriate than

a rigid, predetermined syllabus which may carry a strongly male bias;
(ii) conversion modules, induction periods or drop-in provision can be devised for technological/manipulative skills as can updating sessions on new areas of career development;
(iii) 'women only' courses (preferably with female tutors who also serve as positive role models) are useful as 'bridging' provision in curriculum areas traditionally perceived as male (e.g. technical drawing, car mechanics, computer technology) - there is provision in the Sex Discrimination Act (section 47) for such courses;
(iv) women's studies modules are an appropriate consciousness-raising element where women can locate their experience in a broad historical, social and political perspective. Women's experience can acquire new legitimacy and value as a source of reflection, learning and subsequent progression;
(v) course organisers should avoid the timetabling of subject or vocational options that reinforces stereotypical choice, e.g. mutually exclusive information technology/child development; physics/sociology. Cross-department liaison on timetabling will allow the inclusion of non-traditional vocational samples;
(vi) good practices of learner-centred courses for 'mature' women can be observed outside as well as inside the FE system e.g. the Pre-school Playgroups Association, Women's Institutes and the trade unions.

Teaching style and classroom practice

27. The process of curriculum delivery can be reviewed by:

(i) appraising teaching materials and methods for stereotypical language, exemplars and general male bias (expertise from the schools' sector can usefully be drawn upon here);
(ii) encouraging the participation of female students in activity-based learning, experiments, etc. and enhancing assertiveness and self-awareness;
(iii) ensuring that credit is given for the use of scientific process skills (e.g. planning and problem solving) in whatever context these have been acquired (home economics, child care etc.).

Guidance and Counselling

28. All staff involved in providing guidance and counselling need to ensure that:
(i) they are aware of the special tutoring needs of female students especially those undertaking courses in 'non-traditional' areas;
(ii) that they are kept updated on the range of traditional and non-traditional careers opportunities available for all students;
(iii) that female students are made aware at every stage (pre-selection, during the course, at 'next steps' interviews) of the full range of available employment and the wider opportunities available to those with scientific and technical expertise.

Flexible Learning patterns

29. Strategies such as those described in Flexible Learning Opportunities[9] can help to meet the needs of women for variable patterns of attendance, special support in certain skills areas, and a consideration for their child care commitments. Institutions embarked on developing Flexible/Open learning schemes must nevertheless be aware that:
(i) sufficient and specialised individual counselling and support must be available for all women;
(ii) group workshop/seminar sessions should be organised to establish and maintain contacts between students;
(iii) some 'career/life planning' activity should be included so that individuals have the opportunity to reflect on their experience in a variety of settings and appraise alternative patterns of progression open to them.

Accreditation of prior learning

30. A more detailed discussion of this and its relevance to access into Higher Education is available in Curriculum Opportunity[10]. Guidelines have been devised to assist students and tutors in the accreditation of skills[11] e.g. problem solving, organisational and interpersonal skills gained from experiences acquired before starting a course. There is now a growing awareness from the validating bodies that most women

bring to education a variety of skills and competences learned experientially outside the teaching institution but colleges/ polytechnics do not use the discretion allowed to the full. More guidance on the assessment of experiential learning is obviously required and the FEU is working on that.[12]

Outreach and Access

31. No amount of curriculum review and development will serve the needs of a client group if that group is unaware of the provision or prevented from taking advantage of it because of organisational constraints. Outreach activity aims to stimulate interest and generate local involvement for women not able currently to attend colleges and centres. It can take the form of:

(i) 'taster days' of courses on offer based on community centres, schools, etc;
(ii) inputs to informal gatherings of mother/toddler groups, at health centres, etc;
(iii) a marketing exercise aimed at women involving, as well as conventional publicity: the construction of a 'community profile' to ensure that the needs of the range of interest groups are served, and a local labour market survey so that realistic guidance is given about likely job prospects;
(iv) a reappraisal of part-time programmes to extend the offerings beyond leisure and domestic areas;
(v) a review of all publicity material and possible redesign with women in mind, avoiding use of stereotyped illustrations and language.

32. Access to provision inside and beyond institutions may be constrained by factors outside their control but discussion and collaboration with other branches of a Local Authority's service may remove some of the barriers.

(i) modularisation of fee structures, as well as course provision can be introduced by the College/LEA;
(ii) use can be made of Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) '21-hours rule' concessions for those claiming benefit[13].

(iii) supporting facilities, e.g. playgroups, creche, can be developed as an integrated provision for the local community and educational establishment by working with local social services department and voluntary groups.

V CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

33. The importance of the issues raised in this paper indicates the need for the development of appropriate patterns of curriculum organisation and management.

The outcomes of the initiatives (supported by FEU and others)[14] to investigate more effective ways of managing curriculum and organisational change suggest that small curriculum units may be more effective in responding to curricular demands like those outlined in this statement than large college departments. Smaller units would, in turn, provide opportunities for more women and men to exercise management skills such as team building, leadership and negotiation in preparation for progression to positions of greater responsibility. Such units, supported by senior staff with college-wide responsibilities can act as facilitators of curriculum innovation to meet the particular needs of (in this case), women.

The implications of such a development process will inevitably affect the Burnham criteria for the grading of courses and college establishments which determine the allocation of posts of responsibility.

Women in FE senior management.

34. The 'invisibility' of women in FE colleges is particularly striking at management level where the percentage of women college Principals, Vice-Principals and Heads of Departments has actually declined in recent years. New management models (such as those mentioned in para 33) may help, especially in giving women the experience and confidence to apply for more senior positions.

An agenda for staff development at all levels of management

should include a consideration of:

(i) male/female management styles and models;
(ii) college structures and hierarchies;
(iii)assertion and confidence - boosting for staff of both sexes;
iv) design of new job specifications and performance expectations;
v) the creation of a 'mentor' or network system;
vi) institutional and individual sexism.

VI CONCLUSION - The way forward

35. Attention has been drawn to a number of inconsistencies and deficiencies in the existing further education curriculum and programmes in respect of women. We have indicated some areas where action can be taken at different levels within and beyond institutions to remedy the shortcomings; paragraphs 25-32 constitute a 'checklist for curriculum action' while paragraph 34 represents an outline agenda for the consideration of management issues.

As a first step, however, institutions which have not already done so should develop an equal opportunities policy, together with a plan of implementation which includes strategies for eliminating sexism and for affirmative action. This exercise can itself be an invaluable process in reviewing the curriculum and its provision, involving staff at all levels as well as the Academic Board and Governing Body.

36. The FEU will continue to develop its activities in this field. Priorities have been identified, and we will participate in initiatives to review the curriculum and its management as well as to examine the role of women at all levels in the system - as students, teachers and managers.

Footnotes

[1]Women and Science in FE - a follow-up. RP 259
[2]Perceptual awareness raising with women and girls. RP246
[3]Speech to the Girls' School Association, November 1983.

[4]Y Bennett and D Carter Day release for girls. EOC 1983.

[5]The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education JBPVE, May 1984.

[6]Balancing the Equation. FEU, 1981

[7]MSC: Training Opportunities for Women, 1975

[8]WNC report, p.4.

[9]Flexible Learning Opportunities, FEU 1983

[10]Curriculum Opportunity FEU, 1983

[11]Guidelines for the accreditation of students' prior learning ILEA, 1983

[12]Assessment of Experiential Learning RP231

[13]FEU Guidance note 3. Curriculum implications of the 12/21 hour rules, revised version published November, 1984
See also: Guidance for Colleges on 15-21 hours' study RP201

[14]RP116 Curriculum-led Institutional Development

APPENDIX

Extract from The Other Half of our Future, Women's National Commission, 1984

WE PROPOSE TO EDUCATIONALISTS.....

General

1. Recognise that the width of girls' aspirations and their chances of further training and jobs are powerfully and directly affected by your approach, whether as administrators, teachers or both.

2. Acknowlege that a practical strategy is possible to reduce the problem of sex differentiation, involving: administration of resources; school/college organisation; curriculum; 'hidden curriculum'; teacher quality, attitudes, training; examination syllabuses and content of courses; textbooks; recruitment and deployment of women teachers; careers education; access of industry/commerce to schools/colleges.

3. Reflect on the seriousness of the problem for girls/women and the need for a more vigorous approach than the tentative start now made: by still preparing many schoolgirls for a sheltered life with the emphasis on 'suitable' female skills we may 'educate for incapability' - that is, for frustration, unemployment, and second-class citizenship in a technological society. The long perspective in which good teachers have always seen pupils/students must now take into account women's commitment to paid employment, instability of modern marriage, the greater convergence of men's and women's roles.

Higher and Further Education

4. The University Grants Committee (UGC) should have a policy to counter a possible double set-back in the previous rapid growth towards sex parity in higher education rising from:

a) relatively fewer arts places (the 'girls' subjects');
b) possible lesser attractiveness to girls of longer university-based teacher training courses.

5. The National Advisory Body (NAB) should collect admissions data on a male/female basis in order to monitor any effects of changing policies on the proportion of men and women entrants to HE.

6. Develop some post 'A' level arts to science/technology/information technology (IT) conversion courses with suitable grant arrangements.

7. Examine the working of the mandatory/discretionary grants system. One area of particular concern is that women returners holding arts qualifications should be assisted to gain also first qualifications in science/ technology/IT. Also that possession of the Dip HE (an attractive initial qualification for many girls) should not rule out a mandatory grant for further study.

8. The very poor take-up by girls of new government - sponsored post-graduate IT places (some open to arts as well as science graduates) should be made a matter of public concern by UGC, Vice Chancellors, University and Polytechnic Appointments Boards, and others in a position to inform, interest, and encourage girls in this direction.

9. Positive politics are needed to increase the proportion of women university teachers/college lecturers, especially in faculties where numbers are tiny. These would include new 'career break' and up-dating policies (proposals have been made by to the UGC by Professor Daphne Jackson of Surrey University), and re-examination of the overuse of women on research and other temporary forms of contract, which are creating a category of second-class tenure for women.

10. The age-limit of 35 for 'new blood' posts should be reconsidered as this penalises women staff who have taken a career break.

11. In view of the very small number of women in senior positions in FE, Coombe Lodge (FE Staff Development college) should run balanced courses by encouraging women participants, also concentrate some effort on courses to develop women's potential for higher level posts.

12. Regional Advisory Councils should monitor the balance between male and female students in FE/HE and any change in balance resulting from policy changes. All RACs should set up a **Vocational Courses for Women Committee** on the lines of that set up by the London RAC and ensure that this is an active and innovative body able to monitor and initiate strategies to reduce sex differentiation.

13. The Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer system should be scrutinised to ensure that the advice given to students about accretion of qualifications is as helpful to girls as to boys: at present advice appears to take greater account of typical patterns of qualifications obtained by boys than of the less predictable pattern of grils' qualifications.

Further Education Unit (FEU)

14. Develop in-service training for HE/FE staff to include elements on understanding and combating sex-differentiation.

15. Sponsor the development of course materials accessible to women in science and technology, engineering, computer science, in order to counter male-orientated content and presentation.

16. Sponsor research into teaching methods and language used in textbooks and the classroom to ensure girls/women get benefit from the full range of FE courses.

17. Ensure that equal numbers of women and men are involved in/responsible for any new staff developmen./curriculum work.

18. Investigate and make known good practice in college counselling and careers advice services and seek to promote the development of such services including closer contacts with industry/commerce.

19. Guide colleges participating in Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) schemes on course development breaking with the tradition of heavily sex-stereotyped FE courses and linking with the best of sex-neutral TVEI course in schools.

20. Arrange for an up-date of previous FEU sponsored research on bridging courses for women to bring out best practice/ best results and promote the development of more courses with emphasis on initiating skills in new technology areas. Seek to convince colleges that bridging courses should be well-advertised, resourced and supported as part of an FE contribution to the growing economic need for recurrent training.

Local Education Authorities

21. Develop policies to ensure girls are not excluded from the full range of courses and therefore career opportunities.

22. Monitor what is happening, and where it is shown girls and boys are not participating equally in curriculum areas or examination entries, take remedial action, including in-service courses, designed to improve teaching styles and course materials, and make these areas more accessible to the under-represented sex. Ask schools to show examination results for boys and girls separately whenever published.

23. Take special note of schools where girls are underachieving across-the-board in comparison with boys and against the national trend for girls. This calls for special measures - special support from teachers, films, videos, talks from role models - to raise girls' awareness/confidence in abilities and opportunities; also work on parental attitudes. For materials, use WNC's 'Sex Stereotyping in

Secondary Education Resrouce List'*.

24. In training and discussion on curriculum development consider whether 3rd Year Option choices enable some girls to opt for an unbalanced combination focused exclusively on the traditional female role and likely to narrow the range of future training or job opportunities. The 'finishing school' syndrome (possible combination of humanities only with needlework, cookery, childcare) needs tackling.

25. With reference to computer studies/technology ensure new developments do not consciously or unconsciously discriminate against girls. LEAs should aim as resources allow to increase the numbers of microcomputers in schools so as to end the competition between boys and girls in their use, so that all pupils become computer literate. Take positive action to remedy imbalance e.g. sponsor girls only computer clubs in schools.

26. Formulate guidance for best deployment of computers in schools, where necessary guiding schools away from separating computer studies/usage from the rest of the curriculum and towards using computers as tools in all appropriate curriculum areas. As well as the general benefits of this approach it may help break down girls' association of computers with a taboo 'mathematical' area of the curriculum.

27. Designate an LEA officer with special responsibility to develop equal opportunities policies.

28. Develop staffing policies including training for head/deputy headships to encourage more women to seek senior posts, and retrain for specialisms where women are underrepresented.

29. Press for re-establishment of waivers to enable the employment of well-qualified but uncertificated physics

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*Available free from Women's National Commission, Room 71/3rd Floor, Government Buildings, Great George Street, LONDON SW1P 3AQ

teachers in schools, and for the full and proper training for larger number of CDT staff including women.

30. Use the opportunity for innovation offered by the introduction of the GCSE examination to press for a close look at the elements in the examination system which may disadvantage one sex or the other (e.g. performance of girls on multiple choice questions). The introduction of AS levels may offer the opportunity to induce girls and boys to broaden their curriculum at this stage, making it more feasible, for example, for a later full conversion to either science or arts as required.

31. Take initiatives in developing/maintaining adult education, working with women's organisations, focusing on 'new technology' and traditional male craft skills for career break (25-35) women in particular.

TVEI Local Education Authorities

32. Ensure that preparation for TVEI, its 'marketing', design, organisation and description of courses combats sex-stereotyping. Develop a strategy which 'draws girls in' to technology courses e.g. by linking business studies and information technology, avoiding courses which are overtly linked with standard Occupational Training Families, and keeping options open to give boys and girls the opportunity to sample non-traditional areas.

Careers Service/Careers Teachers

33. Recognise a crucial role in giving the kind of advice to girls which does not reinforce inhibitions about considerations of the widest range of jobs, and avoids using 'realism' about difficulties which would discourage aspirations. Instead, emphasise girls' legal access to virtually all forms of employment and reinforce this with examples of girls successful in new fields, sympathetic, satisfied employers, and women's organisations such as Women in Manual Trades (WAMT) which give sustained, practical support. Make full use of resources (many

listed in WNC's free Resource List - see proposals to Educationalists, para. 23, above).

34. Give support to the development of sex-neutral computer-assisted diagnostic tools and query the emergence of any sex-stereotyping in existing software.

35. Make a particular point of maintaining contacts with those employers who either nationally or locally are known to have developed 'positive action' policies in relation to 'equal opportunity', and ask for young women representatives to speak to girls.

36. Use parents of pupils who have trained in/are employed in non-traditional skills.

37. Make contacts with organisations of women willing to act as role models and talk to girls about non-traditional skills: in the North West the VISTA organisation has recently been developed; and, for example, the United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women may be willing to provide speakers.

38. Seek to ensure that employers involved in industry/schools liaison and willing to provide work experience for girls in non-traditional skills are also willing to consider girls for jobs/apprenticeships. Prepare girls' visits to employers in non-traditional fields by reminding employers that girls' expect their career hopes to be taken seriously and will respond badly to being teased or patronised.

39. Persuade colleagues and Headteachers to respond flexibly to approaches from commerce/industry to give careers talks to girls and boys, bearing in mind that many employers are critical of schools for, in their view, perpetuating sex-stereotyped attitudes amongst girls, denigrating careers in e.g. engineering, industry in general, in favour of arts-biased academic aspirations. Girls who have entered non-traditional work also more often produce evidence of discouragement than encouragement received at school.

40. Help ensure that careers education in schools begins pre-option choice and that young people making option choices and their parents understand that dropping key subjects closes doors to training and consequentially jobs. Encourage school to include, in literature prepared about option choices, sample information about jobs which depend on certain qualifications.

41. Reconsider the role of the careers service/careers teacher, considering how far this could be directly instrumental in helping girls to see and take control of a different future. Perhaps the Finniston idea of 'formation' could be extended outside the limits of preparing engineers and should be used as the base for a new look at the way in which young women's ambitions, capacities and level of readiness for new roles are sharpened.

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The objects for which ***The Further Education Unit (FEU)*** *is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:*
a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvements can be effected;
c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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